



Please return to Helen

Carscallen

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.109/PET.126
17 May 1963

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY



SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH
REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE
TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

PETITION FROM DR. F. IAN GILCHRIST
CONCERNING ANGOLA

(Circulated in accordance with the decision
taken by the Sub-Committee on Petitions at
its thirty-sixth meeting on 9 May 1963)

Leopoldville
Republic of the Congo
April 1963

The Chairman
Special Committee on the Situation with
regard to the Implementation of the
Declaration on the Granting of Independence
to Colonial Countries and Peoples
United Nations
New York 17, New York

*SARA
BP 1320
Leopoldville,
Congo*

Dear Sir:

I believe that by virtue of some of the experiences that I have had, I
may be able to contribute some information which may be of value to the Committee
in its consideration of Angola.

My father first went to Angola about 1930 as a Protestant medical missionary.
I myself was born in Canada while my parents were on furlough in 1935, but at
the age of 3 months, I too went to Angola. I returned to Canada in 1940 and
remained there through 1946. In 1947 we returned to Angola, travelling up
through South Africa, the Rhodesias, and the Congo. I remained there until 1951.

The impressions of those years, must of necessity be varied, and somewhat difficult to verbalize, but let me endeavour. The Angola that I grew up in was not a pleasant place. There was always suffering, and always fear.

Central Angola has a temperate climate, which can be cool enough in the dry season to produce frost. In the wet season the rains are heavy and prolonged. The staple crop is maize, which is raised by the crudest agricultural methods with the crudest sort of instruments. Not that the people do not appreciate better methods, because when some are so fortunate as to have access to something like a plow, others are quick to take advantage. But few can afford such things and so they continue to scratch the earth with hoes and sticks to try to coax forth enough to quiet the belly, and the ever hungry tax collector.

The train which travels between Lobito and Katanga burns wood. So every dry season when the country is a tinder-box, the showers of sparks set the country aflame. Then the rains come and wash the precious minerals and topsoil into the sea. So every year the land becomes less fertile, crops become harder to raise, taxes become harder to pay, and the people become hungrier. The trees are small and stunted. When the wind blows, the earth flies as a new desert prepares itself. And everywhere there are the deep, ugly gashes of erosion.

My friends were always hungry. Find a few caterpillars, catch some flying ants, and come back from the nearby Portuguese Post with tears in their eyes because they saw the big dogs kept by the Portuguese eating meat.

They worked hard to pay the taxes, which were about \$5.35 per male head over the age of 12. But it was difficult because many earned less than \$1.78 a month. Then there were always unusual taxes. For instance, if the local Portuguese community wanted to hold a party, they would impose a special tax in the area which the people would have to pay or go to jail. And there were special taxes for permission to drum - and drumming is the tradition of the people - and many other varieties of special taxes.

Sickness was very prevalent, and the number of Africans I saw in untorn clothes was very few. The infant mortality rate was probably close to 90 per cent.

Parties of police used to stage night raids on villages frequently, to terrorize the populace and to steal. Often they would take men off to prison without reason. I remember one night when one of my friends was taken away. When he came back the next day, he showed me a cob of corn that he had in his pocket. He said "I had this corn, and I had not eaten for some time, but because I was afraid I could not eat even one kernel." In the prison they were subjected to various tortures, and he explained how they had been forced to masturbate into a hollow brick.

It was our habit to make trips to various villages on Sundays, but we would always have to stop at the Police Post responsible for the particular village in order to pay our respects to the Chef de Posto. This was unpleasant, for often we would be entertained by the screams of men being beaten in the jail.

And there was convict labor everywhere. I remember on one trip to the lovely and modern city of Nova Lisboa, being much aroused by the sight of a line of little boys, aged 10 or 11 years, all roped together, dressed in tatters and rags, working on the street under the watchful eye of a guard who was replete with rifle, bayonet, and the ubiquitous whip.

Usually it was the women who built the roads, because so many of the men were away. Valiantly the women of Angola have built thousands of kilometers of roads with their little primitive hoes, and their babies strapped to their backs. Roads which so regularly are washed away by the merciless rain, and must be laboriously reconstructed. One time a friend told me of a scene which occurred near to where we lived. Women were working away on one of these chronically disrupted roads. One had set her baby down by the roadside to sleep. While she was working, it awakened and started to toddle towards her. The guard present ordered it back, so that it would not disrupt the women's work. Uncomprehending, it continued on. He picked it up and with one blow of his whip, killed it.

There were plantations springing up everywhere - sisal, eucalyptus, citrus, etc., so that men were always going away to work on these. But a far greater number of men went on contract labor. Everyone feared it. So many who went away never came back, particularly those who went to Sao Tome. I remember one time a relatively well-dressed man came and fell down at my feet. On his knees

he said: "Please help me. I had nothing. But I worked hard and planted a few orange trees, and did well. See, I have even been able to buy a bicycle. Now they have said I must go on contract."

Once when we were having a picnic on top of Bailundo Mountain, we were puzzled by the road turning black. As the blackness approached we could see that it was people. Lines of people as far as the eye could carry, all being taken away on contract.

As the trucks carrying the "contratodos" to the Coast used to pass by, often you could hear the men singing softly the laments of a gentle but oppressed people.

At Lobito, at the Coast, the ships would sit in harbor for several days on end with men crowded on their decks awaiting the trip to Sao Tome. In this same city of Lobito there were 20,000 Africans living on the mud flats in the most abject poverty and squalor, with 4 fresh water taps, next to a few thousand whites living in the lap of luxury. 10 years later Lobito had changed little, except that there were more whites, and even a few poor whites living in the African slum.

The then prevailing philosophy of the people I knew was that it would be better to be destroyed by the bombs of which they heard, than to continue their present existence. It is true that a minority aspired to "Portuguesisation". The more Portuguese a man's attitude and behaviour, the better was his treatment, and by the large they came to despise their own culture. The smart man was one who wore pants no matter how tattered, rather than a loincloth, who spoke his native tongue with an assumed Portuguese accent, who refrained from any except forced manual labor.

But though the Angolans have been debased by 500 years of Portuguese barbarity, it must never be supposed that they have been destroyed as men, something which the special committee of the ILO does not seem to have appreciated. For those who can know them intimately and gain their confidence, discover a wisdom and human comprehension which is nothing short of wonderful.

The Portuguese themselves? Towards fellow whites they were usually polite and kind. But for the Africans they had only contempt. They always bragged of Portuguese civilization and history, how it was the greatest the world could

ever know. An exception to this rule were the old settler families, some of whom had been in the country for hundreds of years. These took African women and assumed a peasant agricultural existence. The mulatto children of these unions, however, almost invariably rejected their mother's race and became Portuguese in every way. And very often these were as hard on the African as the Portuguese.

Few Portuguese respected an African's life. On my way to Portugal in 1951, I shared a cabin with two Portuguese men. One of them persistently expounded on the necessity of exterminating the blacks. He personally had killed three Africans.

Professionally most Portuguese are poorly educated. There are a few hospitals where Africans may be admitted, but by and large the doctors are not capable of much, and few Africans go to them. One medical officer of my acquaintance, was a narcotics addict. In an area where kwashiorkor is rife and general nutrition very poor, the medical officer noted in his report that nutrition was "good". In the same area and ancilostoma infestation rate is better than 80 per cent. The same officer expressed surprise and disbelief that there might be ancilostomiasis because there were "no mines" in the area. Diagnoses of smallpox are not accepted for official reports.

Nurses are similarly poorly trained. State nurses are not even permitted to take blood pressures, nor even are they taught how.

At the conclusion of my medical studies in 1961, I made application to Portuguese consuls in Canada for a visa to enter Angola. This I did not expect to receive as numbers of other requests from other people had been rejected. However, in July, myself and my wife and daughter were granted 90 days visitor's visas. In August I flew to Angola, and my family followed one month later.

The important events which occurred in Angola in the months previous to our visit, were accounted to me by a trusted friend.

It was just before Easter that the rumor spread suddenly among the whites of Angola that on Easter Sunday the blacks were all going to rise and kill the whites. Because of the swiftness and completeness with which the rumor got around, it seemed likely that it was purposefully propagated by the authorities.

/...

The effect was immediate and terrible. Wherever there were white communities, these formed themselves into vigilante groups who terrorized the countryside, shooting Africans indiscriminately. At the same time that this unofficial campaign was in progress, the authorities began to arrest men who were educated, or otherwise leaders of their people. Most of these were shot. In the Andulo area many were shot for simply being found with pencils or pens, because these indicated that they could write and were hence potentially dangerous. The Balombo and Bocoio areas suffered particularly.

The whites of Bailundo similarly organized a vigilante party which visited the local mission each night, searching the buildings and interrogating the staff. One night there was a particularly great commotion and the missionary went out to find the Administrator arresting his entire nursing staff (some dozen nurses). The Administrator explained that he was actually doing the men a favor because the vigilantes were on their way down to kill them. They were taken to Nova Lisboa where they were detained for more than one year. Two were later released. They were charged with conspiring together to raise funds to send a spokesman to the United Nations. It is believed that they had at least three separate trials on this charge, and there is no doubt that they were beaten often. In the summer of 1962 they were transferred to a concentration camp in Southern Angola near Vila Serpa Pinto. But the chief of the Nova Lisboa PIDE confided that final judgement would come from Luanda, and that there was "no hope". Many others suffered similar fates, including Assimilados, who were told: "We'll take the pants off of all you bastards". They were not treated differently from the ordinary black African.

When I arrived in Luanda in August 1961, there were soldiers and police everywhere. Later I visited the Colonato of Cela. The community was surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers with searchlights. This Colonato was originally supposed to have been a community strictly for whites, and while there I did actually see a white man working on the road, the only time in all my years in Angola that I ever saw a Portuguese doing manual labor. But of the 120 families for whom the colonato was intended, only some 70 remained, the rest having found it more profitable to move elsewhere, and black labor had indeed been brought in.

Bailundo was surrounded by big searchlights which faced into the surrounding countryside. In the nearby communities, the doors and windows of churches and warehouses had been blocked up, and the whites had moved their possessions into them and slept in them together at night. The many communities I visited were similarly fortified with sand bags, barbed wire, and slit trenches. All in an area where not one African had attacked or menaced any white even in self-defense.

Later in Bailundo, and in other larger centres, the activities of the vigilantes were taken over by the Mobile Police. They continued the activities of the vigilantes with their patrols at night and their interrogations.

One night a thief entered our home and stole a considerable sum of money. We were in a quandry as to what to do, for we were afraid that if we told the police they would just beat somebody for a confession. On the other hand, because the amount was large, we thought we should have a claim in lest someone be picked up with it. So my father casually mentioned to the Chief of Police what had transpired, and saying we wanted no investigation. The Chief immediately accused our watchman, whom we knew to be innocent. The Chief insisted, and later sent word that they had captured the thief and that he had implicated our watchman, so that he wanted the watchman for questioning. I insisted that I should go too to help identify the thief. When we arrived at the Police Station, there was no thief. But an interesting thing about the Station was that though the Police force consisted of only 9 men, they had at least 260 rifles lined around inside the building. The Chief was angry with us for not accepting his conviction of the watchman, and insisted that no whites should trust blacks because "they are all terrorists". He had been in Angola three months.

Angola had not changed much in the 10 years of my absence, except that there were many more whites in the country. The people were, if anything, poorer than before, and the villages were depleted of men. The groups of contract laborers were comprised now mostly of small boys, and even women. At Vila Mariano Machada I saw a group of probably 200 boys aged 11 or 12 years, awaiting shipment to the north to work the coffee plantations.

I saw a tremendous number of small things which are difficult to recount, but which are significant, e.g. the separate toilets in the center of a Nova Lisboa park, marked "Europeans" and "Indignas". These things give the lie to the myth of Portuguese racial equality. This color bar was much more noticeable in 1961 than in 1951, when it had been more of a culture bar.

I met many people who had escaped from the region of the River Cuanza. Their uniform story was one of wholesale slaughter along the banks of the river. All the people there resident being destroyed to prevent the epidemic of rebellion from contaminating the rest of Angola. Often the heads of the people were impaled on poles.

I met the father of a young man who had been killed at the Coast. He told of the jail at Lobito, in a semi-desert area, which had 4 walls, but no roof.

After the initial panic and terror in April and May 1961, the authorities gradually resumed control from the vigilantes. From now on the process of elimination was more discreet. People were less often rounded up and shot in large numbers. The usual procedure became to arrest a single individual and take him away for "trial". This is the pattern followed to the present. Leaders and the educated elite are regularly picked up and taken away, a much less disturbing, but equally effective, form of genocide.

There is no doubt that the whole Portuguese philosophy has changed within the past 10 years. Whereas originally it was one of severe paternalistic exploitation, it has now become one of genocide and immigration. Angola must be maintained a new white province of Portugal at all costs. And my letters from Angola come stamped: "Angola, discovered and civilized by the Portuguese, will be forever Portuguese". And whereas previously the old colon families had some influence, now the country is full of new white immigrants, who have no ties and no sympathy with the country.

At the end of 1961, we were given 4 days to leave Angola, and went to Sierra Leone... After one year there I came to the Congo to do medical work among the Angolan refugees under the Emergency Relief to Angola program of the American Committee on Africa.

The first thing to realize in considering the refugee problem is that it is a new problem only in terms of magnitude, for there are thousands, and probably millions, of persons in the territories neighboring Angola who can trace their ancestry back two, three, or four generations to original Angolan refugees. It is probable that people have been fleeing Angola for the past 400 years, which no doubt accounts in large part for the serious underpopulation of the country. So everywhere along the borders, one finds people most active in the revolution, who do not speak Portuguese, many of whom have never been in Angola, but who consider themselves Angolans by virtue of the enforced exile of their parents.

At Kinkuzu, in the Congo, there are representatives of every Angolan tribe, including three of the rare Bushmen from the Kalahari Desert of Southern Angola. This is typical, for the frontier cuts through the lands of many tribes, and in each case the Angolan section of the tribe has fled to their non-Angolan relations. In the Bas-Congo there are commonly estimated to be about 250,000 Kikongo refugees, most having arrived within the past two years. The number is probably actually much higher than this estimate. And similarly, all along the way, there are Bayaka refugees, Chikwe refugees, etc. Only in Katanga is the number smaller than expected, because Mr. Tshombe would not accept refugees, and sent back many of these that did escape. Nevertheless Katanga does harbor many thousands of refugees.

The Congolese people have received the Angolans with an uncommon charity. It is true that they have had many years to learn of their brethren's plight, but when one considers the very considerable hardships which the Congolese people have themselves faced in the past two years, it is more than a creditable compassion. The people have made the refugees welcome in their homes, they have dug up their crops to feed, and as a result many of the Congolese are now becoming a very needy group themselves. In many parts of the Bas-Congo, the refugees now outnumber the Congolese.

The Bas-Congo refugees suffer firstly from hunger. Sickness, nakedness, and an educational vacuum follow. Some of the other refugee groups in agriculturally better areas have a different priority of needs, with malaria, parasitic infestation, and malnutrition causing greatest hardship.

And still the refugees continue to come. Many come wounded, mutilated, burned, and all hungry. Which is more than a little ironical in a country with the temperate climate and agricultural potential of Angola. But it is only the fortunate fraction that gets through. The majority, probably 80 per cent, are slaughtered before they reach refuge. In one recent group of 3,000 people that started out, only 50 reached safety in the Congo.

I have not in this communication attempted to give the total Angolan picture from all points of view. I have tried only to present that part which I have known intimately. There is much more of past history and modern atrocity which can be learned from more original and better qualified sources. It is my hope that this endeavour may help the Committee to know something more of the Angolan tragedy, for it is my earnest belief that the Portuguese policy of genocide and white immigration may very well succeed if something is not done quickly to stay their madness. It is contributed freely and with a heavy heart because I am not unaware of the likely consequences against members of my family, and my friends, still in Angola.

F. Ian Gilchrist, M.D.
